

# Kāpālikas

Although no written works by Kāpālikas are known to us, this antinomian Śaiva movement of skull bearers, who took up the attributes of → Śiva's frightening form, → Bhairava, was once very much present from Kashmir and Nepal to the Tamil-speaking south. The earliest mention of Kāpālikas is found perhaps in Hāla's *Saṭṭasaī*, datable to the 3rd to 5th centuries CE (Lorenzen, 1991, 13), but most of our sources on them come from the 7th to the 12th centuries CE. Since there are mainly indirect sources about their doctrine and practice, it is often difficult to separate fictitious or biased elements from what may be true in their descriptions.

Indeed, their very name is problematic. In its most general usage, the word *kāpālika* can simply denote someone who carries or deals with a skull or skulls (*kapāla*) on a regular basis. Thus, the word has been attested even in the sense of cremation-ground worker (Sanderson, 2009, 294).

Kāpālikas carried a skull with them according to all accounts, thus imitating Bhairava the Brahman-slayer. According to orthodox prescriptions, a Brahman-slayer had to expiate for his sin by living outside society for 12 years, carrying a skull as an alms bowl and a skull-topped staff. However, the Kāpālikas were not the only Śaivas who adopted this practice. So did the Lākulas or Kālamukhas, another Śaiva order of wandering ascetics whose scriptures have not survived (the form Kālamukha occurs in several South Indian sources and the spelling has been common in the academic literature, but otherwise the right and current form is Kālamukha [see Sanderson, 2006, 151]). Furthermore, certain Śākta tantric practitioners also followed this as well as other practices of the Kāpālika ascetics, thus blurring the distinction between the original Kāpālikas and themselves.

Given these usages, one could distinguish between two religious meanings of Kāpālika. First, in a stricter sense, it denotes a particular Śaiva ascetic order, closely related to the Lākulas and the → Pāśupatas. Second, in a wider meaning, it refers to a (usually Śākta) tantric practitioner who adopts the observance and possibly other practices of the original Kāpālikas.

## The Lākulas

The direct precursors of Kāpālikas were the Lākulas, also called Kālamukhas and Mahāvratas (Sanderson, 2006). They were the first Śaiva sect to practice the *mahāvratā* (lit. great observance, also called *kapālavratā* or observance of the skull, *lokātītavratā* or observance going beyond the world, and *mahāpāśupatavratā* or great Pāśupata observance), which required a full assimilation to Bhairava. In addition to carrying the skull-bowl, they wore a sacred thread (→ *yajñopavīta*) made of human hair obtained from corpses, and they adorned themselves with ornaments mostly made of human bones: a necklace, earrings, bracelets or armlets, and a hair jewel (*śikhāmaṇi*). The bone ornaments together with the sacred thread were called the five insignia (*pañcamudrā*), to which ashes were added as the sixth (Sanderson, 2005, 119). Ashes were used to cover the body, a practice that originated with the Pāśupatas. Lākulas were also to carry a skull-topped staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) and to meditate on Rudra (see → Śiva), who was to be seen as all things, and whose highest manifestation was considered to be Dhruva.

The practice of the *mahāvratā* was preceded by Lākula initiation, after which the initiate was also required to understand and meditate on the cosmic hierarchy of 11 levels. These levels include and build on those taught by the Pāśupatas, and they are later extended upward and somewhat changed by agamic Śaivas. Lākula initiation involved, as a preliminary, the empowering of the disciple with the five *brahmamantras* (→ *mantras* associated with the five different forms of Śiva) of vedic origin, also employed by the Pāśupatas. From the few scattered references to initiation, it seems to have functioned similarly to agamic initiation: it started a procedure that was to be completed by further practice and that ultimately led to liberation. Unlike Pāśupata initiation, it comprised the purification of the cosmic hierarchy but did not yet include the fire rituals prescribed by the Āgamas (Sanderson, 2006, 189–194; see → Śaiva Āgamas).

Thus, as far as it can be ascertained without any of their scriptures having survived, the Lākulas based part of their doctrinal and ritual system on that of the Pāśupatas, which they further developed. They recognized the Pāśupata scriptures and added to them their own: the *Pramāṇas* (Authorities), of which only the titles and a short citation are known to us. Their teachings concerning doctrine, ritual, and observances appear to represent a transition between the Pāśupatas and agamic Śaivas (Sanderson, 2006, 199–209).

Their name shows that they recognized Lakuliśa, an incarnation of Śiva, as their preceptor, just as the Pāśupatas did. One can but speculate as to why they adopted this name. It is possible that they claimed to be closer to the original teaching of Lakuliśa than the Pāśupatas themselves, who, according to their own accounts, received the doctrine through various disciples instructed by Lakuliśa.

One doctrinal point on which they clearly disagreed not only with the Pāśupatas but also with other Śaivas was the way in which assimilation (*samatā/sāmya*) to Śiva was perceived to arise at the time of → liberation (*mokṣa*). According to a commonly reproduced account, whose earliest occurrence dates back to Sadyojyotis in the late 7th or early 8th century, Pāśupatas claimed to attain assimilation to Śiva through a transfer of his qualities (*guṇasamkrānti*), while Lākulas believed that Śiva's omniscience, without his omnipotence, was produced *ex nihilo* (*utpatti*) in the individual (Sanderson, 2006, 180–182, 192–199).

As it has been shown (Sanderson 2006, 182–184), the Kālamukhas or Kālāmukhas (lit. the black faced), known mainly from South Indian inscriptions between the 9th and the 13th centuries, are identical with the Lākulas. They are said not only to cover themselves with ashes but also to eat them and to worship Rudra in a vessel filled with alcohol.

## The Soma-Kāpālikas

Next to the Pāśupatas and the Lākulas, the Kāpālikas formed a third itinerant ascetic (*vratin*, as opposed to householders) current within Śaivism. While the word *kāpālika* can be ambiguous, these Kāpālikas had a more specific name that involved some form of the word *soma*

(nectar/ambrosia/moon; see → intoxication). Thus, Soma, Saumya, or Somasiddhāntin (follower of the doctrine of Soma [*somasiddhānta*]) were alternative names for nontantric or pretantric Kāpālikas; we find even the odd compound *somajanakāpālī* (Kāpālika of the Soma people) in the (unpublished) Kashmirian *Jayadrathayāmala* (3.35.33). The Soma-based names often replace the word *kāpālika* in parallel lists given in → Tantras, → Purāṇas, and other sources that enumerate various Śaiva practitioners (*māheśvaras*).

An early agamic Śaiva scripture, the *Sarvajñānottara* (14.4), places promulgators of the Somasiddhānta in its cosmic hierarchy just above the Pāśupatas and the Lākulas (*mahāvratas*), at the level of Īśvara; the Pāśupatas reach only up to the level of plurality (*māyā*), and the Lākulas to knowledge (*vidyā*). Somasiddhāntins are commonly mentioned next to Lākulas in Śaiva tantric sources, as in the *Jayadrathayāmala* (1.45.83), which lists the Somasiddhānta observance next to the Kālamukha one, or in the (unpublished) *Kaula Bhairavamāṅgalā*, which lists the Somasiddhānta doctrine after the Lākula. Similarly, Kāpālikas and Lākulas are placed next to each other in *Jayadrathayāmala* 1.33.17; so are Kāpālikas and Kālamukhas in the *Ṣaṭsāhasrasamhitā* (3.75). D.N. Lorenzen (1991, 7–10) gives a tabulated list of the common classification of the four Śaiva sects, namely Pāśupata, Lākula, Kāpālika, and agamic Śaiva, including further parallels in Purāṇas and some other works.

These enumerations suggest not only that Kāpālika and Soma or Somasiddhāntin are synonyms, but also that these practitioners were closely related to the Lākulas, and, to a lesser extent, to the Pāśupatas. The close doctrinal association is confirmed by one of the most important surviving documents about Kāpālikas – a copperplate inscription found in Malhar, Chhattisgarh, written around 650 CE (see Bakker, 2000, 6). The relevant passage reads as follows:

Śiva has eight embodiments (*mūrtyaṣṭau*) [and eight] lords of divisions (*vigraheśvaras*). The sixty-six Rudras are embodiments of Gahaneśa (“Lord of the Abyss”), they bestow liberation in a different form in each aeon. Now having reached the *kali* age, Śiva descended in this world as Lord Lakuliśa. He was born in the family of a Brahman called Somaśarman (“Whose Shelter Is the Moon”), was initiated by him into the *mahāvratā*, and became Jagadindu (“Moon of

the World”). He then initiated Musalisa. Then, in due course, the venerable Bhīmasoma, disciple of Tejasoma and grand-disciple of Rudrasoma, [was also initiated] according to the tradition started by Soma. (trans. by author)

The listed initiation names show that the text speaks of Somasiddhāntins. The two Kāpālikas of the *Mattavilāsaprahasana* (Farce about the Antics of Drunkards), written in the early 7th century, are also called Satyasoma and Devasomā; thus -soma was most probably affixed to all initiation names. Such practice is not unparalleled, for several Śākta Tantras prescribe that all initiates must bear a name ending in *śakti*, irrespective of gender or caste.

The passage first mentions the eight embodiments (*mūrti*) of Śiva, then the eight *vigraheśvaras* or lords of divisions, and finally Gahaneśa or the lord of the abyss as manifestations of the godhead. All these names are known from Śaiva scriptures, but they go back to the cosmic levels as described by the Lākulas (Sanderson, 2006, 200–201).

The eight embodiments (*mūrtyaṣṭaka*) are identical with the eight *vidyeśvaras* or lords of knowledge (e.g. *Svacchandatantra* 10.1161–1162): Ananta, Sūkṣma, Śivottama, Ekanetra, Ekarudra, Trinetra, Śrikanṭha, and Śikhaṇḍī. In the Lākulas’ system, they are placed just under the two highest forms of Śiva, which are Dhruva and Tejīśa, in the pure section of the universe. The next set of eight lords, the *vigraheśvaras*, is associated with the so-called eight divisions (*vigraha*), which represent the uppermost part of the Lākulas’ impure universe. Their names, which include four vedic ones, are known from the *Matanṅapārameśvara* (1.8.83–5): Śarva, Bhava, Ugra, Bhīma, Bhasman, Antaka, Dundubhi, and Śrīvatsa. Finally, Gahaneśa or the lord of the abyss is placed lower down in the impure universe but just above the 25 cosmic levels inherited from the → Sāṃkhya, which represent the material world.

All these manifestations of Śiva appear at the borders of various divisions of the universe according to the Lākula system, which suggests that not only were the names borrowed from the Lākulas, but also the cosmic divisions were taken over without any change.

The 66 Rudras mentioned, who are embodiments of the lord of the abyss, can be found in the *Jayadrathayāmala* (1.9.448–460) as the 66 Bhavas (Sanderson, cited in Bakker, 2000, 9–10). They are

Śaiva *gurus* forming two groups. The first group of 28 Śivas starts with Śveta and ends with Someśa and Lakuliśa. They are said to bestow both exegesis of the scriptures and Śiva’s grace, that is, liberation through initiation, according to the *pramāṇa* system of knowledge, in other words, according to the Lākula system. They are also said to bestow, but only occasionally, Śiva’s grace immediately. The list of names mainly conforms to the list of manifestations found in many accounts of the Pāśupata system. The second group, comprising 38 Rudras, begins with Vareśvara and ends with Vaṣaṭkāra. They are authorized to bestow Śiva’s immediate grace (*sadyo’nugrahakarṭṛtva*), that is, they can give immediately liberating initiation; they also propound bhairavic teachings (*bhairavāptapravaktārah*).

By claiming these 66 Bhavas as their preceptors and manifestations of Śiva, the Kāpālikas achieved two things. First, they associated themselves with the Pāśupatas and Lākulas by recognizing their → *guru* lineage and by claiming them as their own too. Second, they extended the list with their own, longer lineage of *gurus*, whom they distinguished in two ways: (1) by attributing bhairavic teachings to them and (2) by claiming that they were the only ones to bestow immediate liberation (through initiation) on a regular basis. However, it is by no means certain that these tenets were really those of the Kāpālikas. As the inscription shows, the Kāpālikas recognized the existence of the additional 38 *gurus*, but the claim concerning initiation and bhairavic teachings could also belong to the *Jayadrathayāmala*’s own version of the story.

Whatever the function of these Rudras was, the Somasiddhāntins clearly derived their teachings from Somaśarman. According to the inscription, it is Somaśarman who initiates Śiva’s incarnation, Lakuliśa, into the *mahāvra*ta. It is perhaps also Somaśarman who gives Lakuliśa an initiation name, Jagadindu (unless we interpret this as a mere epithet), of which the second half, *indu*, is a synonym of *soma*, the moon.

Lakuliśa then initiates Mugalisa. It is possible that this Mugalisa is a Prakritic form of Mudgaleśa or Mudgaliśa, who may well be identical with Musaleśa of the little-known Mausula sect (Bakker, 2000, 7). However, we need not suppose that he was a prominent transmitter for the Kāpālikas. The text also allows us to understand that Somaśarman himself or Lakuliśa transmitted the Soma tradition to the Mausulas as well as to

the Kāpālikas separately, or that Musalisa was just one of several *gurus* in the lineage, with whom the Kāpālikas associated themselves.

This version of the descent of Lakulīśa shows, furthermore, signs of an appropriation of the Pāśupata-Lākula tradition and an attempt to demonstrate the superiority of the Soma-Kāpālika school. For Lakulīśa, who is also claimed to be at the origin of the Pāśupata tradition by the Pāśupatas themselves, is nowhere else said to be initiated into the *mahāvratā*; but in this Kāpālika version, he attains a fully legitimate status through his initiation into the *mahāvratā*. Since Somaśarman initiates him, he becomes not only a practitioner of the *mahāvratā*, but also a Kāpālika. The fact that Somaśarman is Lakulīśa's *guru* here makes the Kāpālika tradition date back further and appear more prestigious or original. The procedure of Lakulīśa's legitimation through Soma-Kāpālika initiation also implies that all those who recognized Lakulīśa as their founder, namely the Pāśupatas and the Lākulas, could be considered to be deviating Kāpālikas from the Kāpālikas' point of view.

Apart from the testimony of this inscription, a few additional details are also known about Kāpālikas, mainly from literary sources. From the *Mattavilāsaprahasana* we learn that Kāpālikas were to discard or distribute their possessions (*saṃvibhāga*), in the manner of other ascetic orders. They wore a loincloth (*kaupīna*) to cover themselves and kept only their bhairavic attributes, which included the skull-bowl and perhaps a snakeskin (*ahicamma*, representing one of Śiva's attributes, the snake) for the Brahmanical thread (see → *yajñopavīta*). Unlike other ascetic currents, Kāpālikas seem to have allowed women to receive full initiation: Devasomā appears to be a fully participating ritual companion to Satyasoma.

Kāpālikas seem to have had a strict rule to always speak the truth, *satya* (Hara, 1975, 259). This rule is reiterated in the above farce by the protagonist, himself called Satyasoma. An inscription from 1050, from Kolanupaka in Andhra Pradesh, which records a grant given by a Soma-Kāpālika called Somibhaṭṭāraka, also describes him as a "treasury of truth and ascetism" (*satyatonidhi*; Lorenzen, 1990, 233–234). This inscription confirms once again that they wore the five or six insignia together with the skull-bowl and the skull staff. The list of attributes also includes three instruments, which were probably used during their rites: the hourglass-shaped → *ḍamaru* drum,

the *mṛdaṅga* drum, and the *kāhala*, which is probably a large-sized drum. Somibhaṭṭāraka, who was the head (*sthānādhipati*) of the local temple of Śankareśvara, is said to have worshipped Śrīnātha.

Just as the Lākulas were to eat and drink anything without distinction (as did Pāśupatas in the latter part of their observance), so too did the Kāpālikas consume anything, including meat and leftovers. This as well as their cremation-ground attributes and rites implied that they were considered impure from the Brahmanical point of view. A Brahman who was touched by a Kāpālika had to take a ritual bath to purify himself, as attested, for instance, in Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāgiṇī* (3.369).

This being said, it is difficult to know exactly what impure rites were prescribed and performed by Kāpālikas. The description of Kāpālikas in literary works can be biased and stereotyped, conforming to poetic conventions (Hara, 1975, 259). It is also possible that some playwrights, particularly of later periods, when Soma-Kāpālikas were perhaps no longer part of the religious landscape, confuse Soma-Kāpālikas and certain tantric practitioners whose rites and doctrines are close to and perhaps based on those of the Soma-Kāpālikas. Here are a few practices attributed to Kāpālikas: they use and consume alcohol; they perform human sacrifices and offer human flesh, blood, marrow, and the like to their deity; they meditate on the self as seated in the vulva (a possible reference to sexual rites); and they can obtain supernatural powers (*siddhi*) such as seeing the past, present, and future, attracting or killing someone, and so on. Their supreme god is (Mahā)Bhairava, and they worship terrifying goddesses such as Cāmuṇḍā (see → Kālī). Kāpālikas are often said to roam around or frequent the mountain Śrīparvata, which is identical with today's Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh, the site of the Mallikārjuna *vyotirlinga* (a particularly sacred *linga* said to be made of light, *vyotis*, and to be self-born; Bisschop, 2006, 201). According to the exegetical literature, Kāpālikas understood final liberation to be produced through → possession (*āveśa*) by their supreme deity.

### Kāpālika Practices in Early Tantras

Divine possession (*āveśa*), the practice of the *mahāvratā*, and cremation-ground imagery are also prominent features of certain pre-12th-century

Śākta tantric texts, such as the \**Brahmayāmala* or parts of the *Jayadrathayāmala*; therefore, they appear to be very close to what we can assume to be Kāpālika tenets. These texts are certainly not scriptures of the Soma-Kāpālikas, but they may have been heavily influenced by Soma-Kāpālika practices and were perhaps considered Kāpālika in a broader sense of the word (Dyczkowski, 1989, 29–31; Sanderson, 1988, 668–678). The boundaries between what was Soma-Kāpālika and what was tantric were often unclear: this is shown, for example, by the fact that Kṣīrasvāmin, commenting on Amara’s thesaurus (*Amarakośa* 2.7.25), takes *kapālin* to be a synonym of *tāntrika*, *mahāvratin*, and *somasiddhāntin* (Handiqui, 1956, 640).

If the 66 Rudras of the Soma-Kāpālikas were indeed considered to have the role that the *Jayadrathayāmala* attributes to them, then the second set of 38 Rudras was conceived of by Kāpālikas as the mythical authors of Bhairava-tantras. Another, much later source, Ānandarāyamakhin’s *Vidyāpariṇaya* (a 17th-cent. drama), also attributes the Bhairavāgamas to Somasiddhāntins (Handiqui, 1956, 641). The association of Bhairavāgamas with Soma-Kāpālikas may stem from a confusion, but such a confusion could also reflect actual points of contact and the close relation of the Soma-Kāpālikas with Bhairava-tantric systems. M.S.G. Dyczkowski (1989, 27–29) assumes that Kāpālikas had no scriptures or works of their own and looked to the Bhairavāgamas as their authority. Nevertheless, Kāpālikas are sometimes distinguished from followers of Bhairavatāntras, as in the *Kūrmapurāṇa* (2.37.146), which lists Soma and Bhairava as two separate unorthodox (*vedabāhya*) currents.

A typical borderline case is the representation of Kāpālikas in Bhavabhūti’s early 8th-century *Mālatīmādhava*. Although they do not bear names containing the element *soma*, they could well be Soma-Kāpālikas who are given satirical names after common Kāpālika attributes (Kapālakunḍalā or “She Who Has Earrings Made of Skulls” and Aghoraghanṭa or “He Who Has Aghora’s [i.e. Śiva’s] Bell”). At the same time, their rites and tenets conform quite closely to several prescriptions found in the \**Brahmayāmala* (Hatley, 2007, 84–94), which is an early (6th- to 8th-cent.) Śākta text commonly listed among Bhairavatāntras.

On the one hand, one can suppose that the term Kāpālika was used in a wider sense, possibly referring to practitioners of various cremation-ground rituals who followed Bhairavatāntras and Śākta Tantras. On the other hand, looking at the \**Brahmayāmala* for instance, one can presume that some of its rites may well derive from Soma-Kāpālika sources or practices. The following deities and rites could be borrowings or adaptations from the earlier Kāpālikas:

(1) Unlike in other Śākta Tantras, the \**Brahmayāmala*’s two main deities involve *kapālī* or *kāpālī* in their names: the male is called Kapālīśabhairava, and his consort is Caṇḍā Kāpālīnī.

(2) The *mahāvra*ta figures prominently in some contexts. It must be performed as a preliminary to some cremation-ground practices (*BrY.* 46.2–3; 47.3; 48.10) and is described as the most powerful of the preliminary observances called *vidyāvratas* (*BrY.* 21.108–109). The text gives us the following definition of the *mahāvratin*’s appearance:

[The practitioner] must cover his body with ashes and wear a crown of his twisted hair. The top of his head bears the crescent moon and is decorated with [a diadem of] skulls [incised on bone]. He wears jewels made of pieces of human bones in his ears, on his head, and on his arms. His sacred thread is made of human hair, and a [similar?] girdle decorates his hips. He must put on a necklace and place a [bone ornament?] on his hair tuft. His staff has a trident and a human skull on it, with decorations made of human hair. He should play the *ḍamaru* drum or a kettle drum, o famous Goddess. He must also have a bell and put a garland of bells on his girdle. He should wear jingling jewels on his feet as well as on his hands and fingers. He has a heavenly armband on the upper arm and must draw an eye on his forehead. He must emit a jackal’s cry. (*BrY.* 21.102–107; trans. by author)

(3) Unlike in other Śākta Tantras, divine possession (*āveśa*) in the \**Brahmayāmala* is not said to be caused by a → *yoginī*, a goddess, or Śakti (→ Mahādevī), but (mainly) by Bhairava. At the end of the above *mahāvra*ta, as a result of the practitioner’s assimilation to Bhairava, the skull-bearing god appears and offers a boon. The practitioner (*sādhaka*) chooses to be possessed by Bhairava, who thus enters him through his mouth.

Bhairava will be in his heart, while various groups of female deities will occupy different parts of his body. In this way, the practitioner is said to become Śiva in person.

Other passages describe possession by Bhairava in a similar way. Although possession is not the result of the *mahāvratā*, one must usually transform the body according to the *mahāvratā* beforehand (*mahāvratatanusthita*). Near the end of the passage cited below, it is also stated that the practitioner will thus possess all the qualities that Bhairava has (*ye dharmā bhairave deve tair dharmaiḥ sa samanvitaḥ*; *BrY.* 47.48). In this way, the text explicitly relates possession to the doctrinal question of how one attains Śiva-hood and Śiva's qualities.

The practitioner spoke: "Oh god, bearer of the trident, if you are satisfied with me, give me a boon. Accept me as your son, oh god, and may my sacrificial pavilion succeed."

[Bhairava replied:] "Well done, great man, master of practitioners, great ascetic! Who other than you would merit to be my son, oh lord of men? Open your mouth, my child, I shall enter the interior of your heart. Thanks to this, you shall quickly become as strong and powerful as me."

Then the *mantra*-knowing practitioner must perform circumambulation clockwise and open his mouth. [The god] shall enter him, there is no doubt about that, and when he entered, [the performer of the ritual] will become Bhairava. The eminent practitioner shall fly up with his sacrificial pavilion, as the Lord himself... He shall take up any form at will... He will see whatever exists from [the level of] Śiva down to the Avīci hell with his own eyes. He shall be worshipped as Śiva. (*BrY.* 47.40–47; trans. by author)

(4) A cluster of chapters (46–48), the same ones that also prescribe the *mahāvratā* and promise possession by Bhairava, describe cremation-ground practices that could well come, at least partly, from the Soma-Kāpālikas. Each chapter involves a conversation with Bhairava and/or other deities or creatures. The first of these chapters (46) is called *Mahāmanthāna* (The Great Churning). The churning is performed in the cremation ground and preceded by the worship of nine skulls arranged on a → *maṇḍala* and filled with blood, alcohol (*madirā*), and the mingled sexual fluids (*picu*). For the churning, which is carried out on top of a corpse, the practitioner

must use materials obtained on the spot: the *ad hoc* pavilion that he constructs is made of human bones, the vessel used is fashioned of clay that he finds in the cremation ground, the churning stick is a large bone such as the tibia, and the rope is made of human hair and intestines taken from the dead. The rite mainly consists of acting out the cosmic churning of gods and demons in its cremation-ground version. Accordingly, it produces various miraculous objects, such as the Kaustubha gem (a gem suspended on the breast of → Kṛṣṇa or → Viṣṇu) or the moon, and makes groups of mythical beings and powers present, whose help may be refused, if one aspires for greater powers or results. The practitioner in fact prepares his own *soma* of impure substances in a vessel called *sthālī*, which he identifies with the terrifying goddess Aghorī, while the churning stick is to be identified with Bhairava and himself. Near the end of this rite, Bhairava appears with his goddesses, and they enter the practitioner. At the very end, Aghorī herself appears before him and accepts him as her son, giving her breast to feed him. After he drinks the nectar of immortality (which may be Aghorī's milk identified with the impure *soma* potion prepared, but this is not stated), he will be omniscient and identical with Bhairava himself. All the 70 million *mantras* shall also enter his heart. He will possess all the qualities that the supreme and transcendental (*tattvātīta*) lord has.

(5) Various miscellaneous items could be added to this list, in particular substances obtained in the cremation ground, which could possibly indicate a common core of mortuary rites. Such rites include using the ashes of the cremated, not only to cover the body with, but also to draw a *maṇḍala* (Dyczkowski, 1989, 6), the offering of human flesh, and the use of the human skull as a substrate of worship (*tūrayāga*; Dyczkowski, 1989, 30). It is more questionable whether and which tantric sexual rites could possibly have Kāpālika origins.

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